

Why risk a kiss from a drunken stranger?

New Year's celebrations around the globe are only a few mouse clicks away

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Face it: We are a society of voyeurs.

From reality television shows to webcams, we are obsessed with watching what other people are doing, and apparently it is completely acceptable.

For New Year's Eve we've decided to take a look at some of the biggest celebrations around the globe. You could join a party by hopping a last-minute flight to a wild destination. Although this may be fun, you might end up crammed into a street with a bunch of inebriated people spilling their drinks on you and trying to give you a New Year's kiss.

To avoid this scenario, save money and forgo a designated driver, get online and watch from home in your jammies (<http://newyears.earthcam.com>).

Staying home will actually enable you to visit more parties, from Australia to Rio to Las Vegas. Before webcams this would have been an impossible feat, unless you happened to be a superhero. Plus, you can celebrate the new year for a full 24 hours as midnight falls on all parts of the globe.

And don't forget the noisemakers. Just because you are home, alone, on the biggest party night of the year doesn't mean you can't at least try to get into the spirit.

Note: Experts are debating whether no kiss on New Year's is worse than a kiss by a slobbery stranger. It is advised that you have at least one friend over to celebrate.

Whatever you decide, have a safe and happy new year, and resolve to add some fun to your life.

New Year's Eve around the world

Release your inner voyeur at <http://newyears.earthcam.com>.

The Web site has all the major cities covered, so there should be some pretty interesting things to see as the world counts down the minutes to 2006.

New Year's Eve NEW YORK:

The world will be watching as the ball drops in Times Square. It is one of the most famous celebrations, and certainly one of the coldest. In this case, you probably will be happy to be snug in your home watching on television or the Internet.

If you're going, get there early because the streets start closing around 6 p.m. as thousands flock to party central to wait for the 1,070-pound ball to drop. It is covered with 504 Waterford crystal triangles, which this year have been engraved with the names of those lost in the World Trade Center attacks. For information on the party, visit <http://timessquarenyc.org>.

New Year's Eve MIAMI:

Miami's New Year's Eve icon, the "Big Orange," will rise up the side of The Hotel Intercontinental as people count down to midnight at Bayfront Park. The giant party will feature legendary disco acts Rose Royce and France Joli at a free concert. Fireworks over Biscayne Bay will mark the dawning of 2006. Bayfront Park is at 301 N. Biscayne Blvd., Miami. Information is available online at www.bayfrontparkmiami.com.

New Year's Eve NEWORLEANS:

The French Quarter is the place to be in New Orleans as thousands pack the streets to welcome the new year. This year local musicians will gather at a stage in Jackson Square on Decatur Street for the "New" New Orleans New Year's Eve Celebration, presented by the Crescent City Countdown Club.

As the gumbo pot drops at midnight, all eyes can look to the sky for Symphony in the Sky, a fireworks show accompanied by choreographed music. For information on all New Orleans events, visit the Convention and Visitors Bureau at www.neworleanscvb.com.

New Year's Eve RIO

More than 2.5 million people will crowd Copacabana in Rio this New Year's Eve. The number will be matched at the other beaches as people celebrate in carnival-like style.

The fireworks won't be the only things illuminating the beaches. Thousands of candles will line the beaches as Christian and Afro-Brazilian religions mix, and all gather to make promises and offerings for the new year. Red roses and white gladioli will fill the surf as people make their offerings to the Queen of the Sea, Iemanjá. Everything goes here, so check it out at www.rioconventionbureau.com.

New Year's Eve VEGAS

America's Party New Year's Eve 2006 is expected to draw thousands of people to the Strip. Parties will rage up and down the street, and at midnight fireworks will explode above the hotels from Mandalay Bay to the Stratosphere.

The equally popular New Year's Eve Street Bash will be held downtown at Fremont Street with many big-name bands and, you guessed it, a fireworks show. Check out all the events at www.visitlasvegas.com.